

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 594

By Camper

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Ruthie M. Bell-Deberry on the celebration of her ninetieth birthday.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly pay tribute to those citizens who are celebrating special occasions in their estimable lives; and

WHEREAS, Ruthie M. Bell-Deberry will celebrate her ninetieth birthday on February 21, 2016, a milestone that will be commemorated as yet another precious souvenir of life's rich pageant; and

WHEREAS, the daughter of Willie and Hettie Mae Bell and the youngest of two children, Ruthie Bell-Deberry was born in Coldwater, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, she attended Fredonia Elementary School and Senatobia Junior High School, and received her high school diploma from Booker T. Washington Evening School, which she attended while raising four children; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Bell-Deberry earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Mississippi Industrial College; and

WHEREAS, her estimable career includes thirty-three years of distinguished service with the Memphis and Shelby County school systems, and she officially retired in 1995; and

WHEREAS, Ruthie Bell-Deberry was included in *Who's Who Among America's Teachers* in 1992, having been selected by one or more of her former students who went on to become students of merit; and

WHEREAS, she continues her membership in several professional organizations, including the National Education Association, the Tennessee Education Association, the Memphis Education Association, and the Retired Teachers Association; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Bell-Deberry is the loving mother of four, grandmother of twelve, great-grandmother of fourteen, and great-great-grandmother of six, all of whom she has led with integrity, love, discipline, guidance, and strength; and

WHEREAS, a pillar of her community, Ruthie Bell-Deberry has focused her activism on community involvement, safety, and the improvement of neighborhood services. She has also been a champion of civil rights, with a steadfast commitment to voter registration; improved educational opportunities for children, especially African-American children; racial equality; and summer programs and employment for young members of her community; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Bell-Deberry was also a witness to some of the most seminal moments of the twentieth century; she was a participant and organizer in peaceful protests led by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as Vasco and Maxine Smith. She participated in marches, lunch counter sit-ins, and boycotts, and she served as a voting poll worker during citywide elections and subsequently became a supervisor; and

WHEREAS, a Christian woman with a deep and abiding faith in God, Ruthie Bell-Deberry is a member of the Mt. Vernon Baptist Church-Westwood, where she has held several membership and leadership roles with organizations such as Missionary Society Matrons, Adult Missionary Society, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Hospitality Committee, and February Birthday Month Club; she currently serves as a member of the Mothers' Board and was formerly the group's president; and

WHEREAS, as she enters her tenth decade, Mrs. Bell-Deberry is still an active and productive member of society; and

WHEREAS, we wish to grasp this golden opportunity to specially recognize one of Tennessee's most outstanding citizens on this very special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate Ruthie M. Bell-Deberry on the

celebration of her ninetieth birthday and extend to her our best wishes for much continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.